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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 000406

SIPDIS

TO THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR SOBEL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: YOUR MEETING WITH DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTER BOT

REF: THE HAGUE 3350 (2004)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD SOBEL FOR REASONS 1.4(B) and (D).

Madame Secretary:

1. (C) Foreign Minister Bot requested this meeting to discuss a wide range of U.S.-EU issues prior to the President's visit to Europe. A former Dutch permrep to the EU with a pro-European reputation, Bot's appreciation of the transatlantic relationship appears to have deepened and strengthened during the six months of the Dutch EU presidency. On several key issues -- e.g. Iraq, Ukraine, China, Turkey -- Bot leveraged his understanding of European politics and institutions to advance a solidly transatlantic agenda. His candid assessments of internal European decision-making at critical moments also proved invaluable. Bot very much wants to remain a player, and is seeking to stake out a clear role for the Dutch (and for himself) in the post-Presidency environment. Although we have had our recent -- over the Dutch withdrawal from al-Muthanna, for example -- this meeting provides an excellent opportunity to take advantage of Bot's credibility and experience to refine our message to Europe, while encouraging Bot to assume a more active leadership role in key areas.

IRAQ:

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2. (C) Bot personally made Iraq a high priority during the Dutch EU Presidency. He should continue to press the EU from within to assume greater responsibilities in Iraq, and to move quickly to establish a physical presence on the ground in particular. The decision -- which Bot fought in cabinet -- to withdraw the Dutch bilateral military presence from al-Muthanna next month is unfortunately irreversible. The Dutch were among the first, however, to commit personnel to the first phase of the NATO training mission and have indicated a willingness to provide up to 100 in later phases -- with the caveat that they expect other partners to provide similar numbers. It would be useful to remind Bot that while we appreciate Dutch efforts to press allies to be more forthcoming, basing Dutch contributions on strict definitions of proportionality would be counterproductive.

3. (C) The Dutch have never ruled out additional missions in Iraq, and Bot in particular may be receptive to ideas for how the Dutch could fill important niches. For example, The Dutch could be asked to consider expanding bilateral support to Iraqi institutions such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (the Dutch are currently training one class of junior Iraqi diplomats in the Hague) and Justice (the Dutch last year hosted a successful conference of Iraqi jurists in The Hague) or to sponsor specific reconstruction and development projects in the al-Muthanna area to take advantage of existing links to the local community.

CHINA ARMS EMBARGO:

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4. (C) Bot started the Dutch presidency resigned to lifting the China Arms Embargo, but ended it determined to prevent a lift on his watch. He can continue to provide useful insights into how the issue is being handled within EU circles, and should be pushed to keep the EU focused on its commitment -- which the Dutch insisted on inserting into the December 17 Council declaration -- not to increase sales to China in quantity or quality. The Dutch have made clear that they will take their lead on this issue from the British, and that they will not stand alone to prevent a lift, but they may be able to help us find and exploit potential cracks in the EU's consensus. Bot should also be left with no illusions about the likely consequences of a lift, including potential complications in U.S.-European defense trade.

CUBA:

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5. (C) The Dutch continue to represent the EU Presidency in Havana (since Luxembourg has no mission there) and have deep concerns about the human rights situation there. The Dutch have so far not been as active as the Czechs or Poles in pressing the EU to maintain contacts with dissidents as it

improves relations with Havana; Bot could and should do more in this area. For example, he could instruct the Dutch Embassy in Havana to respond positively to our request that US representatives be invited to the monthly coordination meetings on human rights held by EU missions in Havana.

TURKEY/CYPRUS:

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16. (C) As a former Ambassador to Turkey, and the man under whose watch the Turks finally got a date to begin accession talks, Bot has a personal interest in facilitating Turkey's bid to accede to the EU. The Dutch MFA plans to establish a regular bilateral forum for discussing EU accession issues with Turkey along the lines of their previous successful relationship with Poland; this relationship may prove useful in identifying and resolving problems ad October 3 approaches. The Dutch can also provide useful insights into EU thinking regarding Cyprus, and are keenly aware that a failure to resolve the current impasse over Berlin-plus has serious implications for NATO.

ICC/SUDAN:

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17. (C) We will have little success convincing Bot to break from EU consensus to support an AU/UN tribunal on Darfur as long as the ICC remains an option in European eyes; as the host of the ICC, the Dutch are uniquely committed to seeing it succeed. We can, however, ask Bot to tone down the rhetoric and activities of Dutch representatives in New York, Brussels, and elsewhere opposing alternatives to the ICC. As a pragmatist, Bot should understand that a public spat over this issue does nothing either to promote the transatlantic agenda or to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Dutch, and Bot personally, have been heavily involved in Darfur (the Dutch, for example, paid over half of the EU's contribution to the AU mission) and do not want to jeopardize a potential resolution over technicalities.

AFGHANISTAN:

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18. (S) In the debate over the al-Muthanna withdrawal, the Dutch government cited commitments in Afghanistan -- including a possible deployment of special forces to OEF and heading up a new PRT in phase III -- as one reason for leaving Iraq. These commitments are substantial, useful, and appropriate, but you may want to set down a marker that they should not be used to justify seen as substitutes for contributions in Iraq -- both are high priorities. The Dutch have also recently expressed public interest in deploying the Dutch battalion of the SRF to Afghanistan to support upcoming elections, but have balked at deploying the more substantial Dutch NRF forces (approximately 4,000 troops.) NATO has not yet determined which force, if either, should be deployed for this mission, but Dutch efforts to predetermine the outcome are not helpful.

MIDDLE EAST:

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19. (C) Last November, Bot was eager to transform his successful hosting of the EUROMED conference in the Hague into a prominent role in the Middle East Peace Process. So far, however, he has been unable to carve out an appropriate role for himself or the Netherlands either within the EU or bilaterally. Bot correctly judges that there is broad public support (including from the main opposition parties in parliament) for increased engagement in the Middle East, but he will not insert himself into the process without being asked.

AFRICA:

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10. (C) Already heavily involved in Africa -- the Dutch are the fourth largest donor of aid to the continent -- Bot is under constant pressure from the Dutch parliament (and Dutch development minister Agnes van Ardenne) to do more. The Dutch uniquely include a major focus on peace and security in their African development policy, and have expressed interest in greater coordination with the U.S., especially in the Horn and Great Lakes Regions. In fleshing out possible areas of increased cooperation in Africa, we should remain cognizant of the fact that African initiatives have sometimes been portrayed as alternatives to missions in Iraq or Afghanistan; we will need to make clear in any discussion where our top priorities lie.

BOTTOM LINE:

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11. (C) Bot's experience and credibility make him a useful European interlocutor and an effective advocate for the transatlantic agenda. During the Dutch presidency, he

repeatedly demonstrated a talent for translating transatlantic objectives into the language of Europeanism, and for discreetly managing difficult issues (such as Turkey or China) to successful conclusions. It would be in our interest to find creative ways to harness his skills as a coalition builder and his newly-deepened transatlantic orientation in the post-presidency environment as well.

12. (C) One final point you may want to stress in your discussion is that the concept of proportionality creeping into many Dutch debates (on Iraq and Afghanistan, for example) is misguided. The value we place on our partnership is not based on whether or not the Dutch contribute their fair share to any given operation, but rather reflects the trust developed over a long history in which each side demonstrated its willingness to do whatever was needed to achieve shared objectives.

SOBEL